

and socially, working with people of all ages, with a special emphasis on helping high-risk and at-risk youth, young adults and their families.

Today, because of Tammy Membreno's persistence and advocacy, the organization has grown from three staff members to one with over twenty-three employees and multiple programs serving over 20,000 children and families in Northeast Los Angeles.

Thanks to Tammy Membreno's vision, Barrio Action has a permanent home in the community of El Sereno. Barrio Action is the only youth and family center in El Sereno, a community of over 54,000 residents.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring and celebrating Tammy Membreno.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MEL
MERMELSTEIN

HON. ALAN S. LOWENTHAL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 7, 2022

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to reflect on and honor the life of Mel Mermelstein, a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, later a U.S. immigrant who served our country in the Korean War, a pioneering voice in the legal fight against Holocaust denialism, and a proud champion and teacher of Holocaust education and remembrance.

Mermelstein died January 28, 2022, at his home in Long Beach, California. He was 95. Mermelstein was born in Mukachevo, Czechoslovakia on September 25, 1926. His hometown was later occupied by the Hungarians and is currently part of the Ukraine. Mermelstein was 17 years old in 1944 when the Nazis rounded him up along with other Jews who had been stripped of their homes, denied education and were relegated to ghettos. They were transported by cattle car to the infamous Nazi camp, Auschwitz, in German-occupied Poland.

Mermelstein later recounted in numerous interviews, that upon arrival, his mother who was helping a woman with three or four small children, was immediately ushered to the gas chamber line. His two sisters who had been selected for slave labor, ran to be at their mother's side. They all perished that day in the Nazi death factory. Thereafter, his father and brother were also senselessly murdered by the Nazis, leaving Mel the sole survivor of his immediate family.

During his internment at Auschwitz, Mermelstein was forced by the Nazis to work as slave labor. In January 1945, as Soviet Troops advanced, the Nazis began mass executions and evacuations of prisoners from Auschwitz. Mermelstein was forced to march on foot for three weeks in the bitter snow in what has come to be known as the death marches. After surviving the 155-mile forced march to Gross-Rosen concentration camp, he was packed onto a train and sent to Buchenwald, another Nazi concentration camp.

On April 11, 1945, U.S. forces liberated Mermelstein and the other surviving Jews from Buchenwald. Upon liberation, Mermelstein was 18 years old and weighed 68 pounds. He remained in the camp while the Red Cross offered medical care and aid. After approxi-

mately three months, he returned to Mukachevo. With his entire family murdered and his family home occupied, Mermelstein made a decision to begin a new life in the country that had liberated him from hell.

Mermelstein knew he had an uncle and aunt in New York. Although he did not speak English at the time, Mermelstein immigrated to the U.S. through Ellis Island in 1946, where he eventually became a naturalized citizen. In 1950, Mermelstein was drafted into the U.S. Army. Although he was given the ability to forgo service, he proudly served in the American armed forces. After his initial training, and because of his extensive linguistic abilities including seven languages, he was selected to work Army intelligence during the Korean War. He later worked as a translator at the United Nations.

After his service to this country, Mermelstein began to pen his experiences in the Nazi camps in his memoir, "By Bread Alone." In 1960, Mermelstein met his wife, Emma Jane Nance, then a schoolteacher in New York. The couple moved to Los Angeles in 1961 to start their family. Mermelstein set-up and ran a successful manufacturing company that made wooden pallets. He went on to employ generations of workers, including his yard manager that Mermelstein employed for 55 years.

While running a successful business, Mermelstein, deeply scarred and traumatized by his experiences in the Nazi death camps, began traveling back to Auschwitz and other surrounding concentration camps. In 1967, with the advent of the Six-Day War, the conflict between Israel and seven Arab states, Mermelstein was compelled to make sure evidence of what happened to his family and to the millions of other Jews at the hands of the Nazis was not buried or destroyed.

Hearing the rising number of threats being made against Jews and committed to the promise he made to his father, Mermelstein life's work became to ensure that the world would never forget. He spoke to classrooms and school assemblies educating students and teachers of the atrocities he experienced as a teen, warning against man's inhumanity to man. He accompanied students to Auschwitz and spread a message of hope, peace, resilience and reconciliation. His focus was on intellectual curiosity and what can be learned from such a dark period in history. He lives on as an inspiration to many.

In the late 70's Mermelstein actively debated Holocaust deniers on the radio and television. In 1980, a Holocaust denier organization claimed the planned extermination of Jews by the Nazis was a myth and offered a reward publicizing it in Jewish newspapers. Mermelstein was incensed and wrote a letter to the editors of various newspapers who published the advertisement expressing his disgust. The Holocaust denier organization turned its focus to Mermelstein and challenged Mermelstein to prove that Jews were gassed in gas chambers at Auschwitz. The Institute for Historical Review, a known hate group "offered a \$50,000 award to prove Jews were gassed at Auschwitz," recounted William Cox, a Long Beach attorney. Cox was so moved after reading Mermelstein's memoir, "By Bread Alone," he offered to represent Mermelstein to take on the so-called revisionists pro bono.

In 1981, in the Mermelstein v. IHR case, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Thomas T.

Johnson took judicial notice of the fact that Jews were gassed in gas chambers at Auschwitz. The ruling was a "personal vindication" for Mermelstein, his attorney Cox recounted. In 1985, the IHR and Mermelstein reached a settlement agreement, and Mermelstein received a damage award and a letter of apology from the organization. This became the subject of the movie "Never Forget," starring Leonard Nimoy.

Over five decades, Mermelstein returned to Auschwitz and surrounding death camps obtaining artifacts and other items. Mermelstein processed his trauma and pain creating pieces for display in an exhibit which was formerly housed on his business property. Tens of thousands of students toured his exhibit for free over the decades. Currently, Mermelstein's extensive collection of artifacts is being curated for permanent display. Among the physical reminders of the Holocaust he collected are uniforms worn by inmates, pieces of barbed-wire fence and even parts of a Jewish prayer book found buried near an incinerator.

In a collaboration between the Auschwitz Study Foundation (a non-profit founded by Mermelstein in 1978) and the Chabad Jewish Center in Newport Beach—the Orange County Holocaust Education Center will house Mermelstein's collection for access by students, teachers and the public. A documentary based on his life, "Live to Tell" is slated for release later this year.

Mermelstein is survived by his wife, Jane Mermelstein; his children, Bernie, Edie, Ken and David; five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DIXIE
CLEM

HON. VAN TAYLOR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 7, 2022

Mr. TAYLOR. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to honor and celebrate the life of Dixie Carolyn Clem.

The youngest of four children, Dixie was born on October 30, 1930, in Booneville, Arkansas. In 1948, she would marry Emmitt Mason Clem, and they would remain firmly united in marriage for 53 years until his passing in 2001.

In 1955, Dixie relocated to Plano, Texas after her husband was appointed the Band Director for Plano High School. Upon settling in the area, Dixie began a lifelong involvement in her beloved Plano community including her membership at First United Methodist Church in Plano, the Plano Chapter Order of Easter Star, Mother Advisor of Plano Rainbow Chamber, Plano Good Sam Travel Club, Past President of Plano Business and Professional Women, and as the first woman to serve on the Plano Planning and Zoning Commission. Dixie also maintained employment with the Plano Star Courier.

Always invested in her community, Mrs. Clem maintained a deep commitment to the Girl Scouts and could oftentimes be seen supporting her husband from the stands at band marching contests and football games. Dixie and Emmitt maintained a passion for travel and were known to spend summers journeying